



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Access to music lessons and performances for special needs and disadvantaged community**

*Launch of **The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme** to provide persons with special needs and disadvantaged individuals with equal access to music lessons and performing opportunities*

**SINGAPORE, 25 JULY 2016** – Singapore’s largest inclusive orchestra, The Purple Symphony, and GIC, Singapore’s sovereign wealth fund, has introduced a new programme to provide persons with special needs and disadvantaged individuals an opportunity to pursue their musical talent. Called **The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme**, it will expand the orchestra’s outreach and give more than 90 such individuals the opportunity to learn music and perform in public. GIC is committed to provide support of \$450,000 over three years to develop the musical talent and confidence of award recipients.

One of the first few to benefit from the programme is Ms Wan Wai Yee, 44. Visually impaired, Wai Yee has always had a passion for singing, and listened closely to cassette tapes to help her improve her vocal ability. With **The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme**, Wai Yee will be able to hone her skills with professional vocal coaches and pursue her dream of being a professional theatre star.

The Purple Symphony was introduced to the stage by the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) last year. It comprises 90 musicians with and without special needs, coming together to serve the community through their common passion for music. At its inaugural concert on 17 July 2016, the orchestra showcased their unique abilities to over 450 guests at the Drama Centre at the National Library Building.

Ms Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Singapore District said: “The Purple Symphony signals how Singapore is becoming more inclusive as a society. The opportunity to discover, hone and apply one’s musical abilities should be available to all, regardless of their background. The new Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme seeks to develop the musical talents of persons with special needs and/or who are disadvantaged. It will provide them with equal access to develop their skills and learn from trained professionals, as well as allow them to perform with others and serve the community on a public platform.”

Ms Deanna Ong, GIC’s Director for Human Resource & Organization added: “GIC believes in building more confident and inclusive communities in Singapore, and is excited to partner Purple Symphony for this training award programme. We believe Purple Symphony offers a unique opportunity to develop and showcase these talented Singaporeans. Through this meaningful experience of learning

and performing, the recipients will grow in confidence and inspire all of us to play more active roles in our communities.”

### **Growth of The Purple Symphony**

Led by Artistic Director Mr Quek Ling Kiong, The Purple Symphony has grown in the past year, with more musicians with and without special needs signing up as members of this meaningful initiative.

These include Mr Ng Kok Wee, 46, an experienced dizi player who suffers from Ankylosing spondylitis – an inflammatory disease that causes some of the vertebrae in the spine to fuse together. Despite his condition, Kok Wee’s cheerful disposition and passion for music keeps him going. He joined The Purple Symphony this year to continue in his pursuit of music.

Said Mr Quek: “We want to include people with special needs and showcase their musical talents through The Purple Symphony. By coming together to make music as one, we learn how to share and care for others, and that different people have different needs.”

An increasing number of Singaporeans, organisations and celebrities alike are getting to know about The Purple Symphony, with the orchestra receiving support from popular local artiste Benjamin Kheng of The Sam Willows, who made a special guest appearance at the inaugural concert on Sunday.

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#### **About Central Singapore Community Development Council**

Lying at the heart of Singapore, the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) serves more than 975,000 residents living in Ang Mo Kio, Bishan-Toa Payoh, Jalan Besar and Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs), and Radin Mas, Potong Pasir, and Sengkang West Single Member Constituencies (SMCs).

The CDC envisions a self-reliant, vibrant and inclusive Central Singapore District. It works in close partnership with schools, voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs), grassroots organisations (GROs), government and commercial agencies to fulfil its mission of assisting the needy, bonding the people and connecting the community.

#### **About The Purple Symphony**

The Purple Symphony debuted on 31 July 2015 as Singapore’s first inclusive orchestra comprising musicians with and without special needs. The orchestra is made up of four key musical sections: Percussion, Strings (Plucked and Bow), Winds, and a special Choir. Beyond being a platform for the inclusion of people who are different, The Purple Symphony is a ready avenue for musicians to learn and share music with one another, support inclusion, celebrate their abilities, and serve the community as one.

Facilitated by Central Singapore Community Development Council, The Purple Symphony is a collaborative project made possible with the support of passionate individuals and representatives from Lighthouse School, Movement for the Intellectually Disabled, Pathlight School, Singapore Cheshire Home, Singapore Management University, Singapore Youth Chinese Orchestra and The Little Heartstrings.

**About GIC**

GIC is a leading global investment firm with well over US\$100 billion in assets under management. Established in 1981 to secure the financial future of Singapore, the firm manages Singapore's foreign reserves. A disciplined long-term value investor, GIC is uniquely positioned for investments across a wide range of asset classes, including real estate, private equity, equities and fixed income. GIC employs more than 1,300 people across offices in Singapore, Beijing, London, Mumbai, New York, San Francisco, São Paulo, Seoul, Shanghai, and Tokyo. For more information, please visit [www.gic.com.sg](http://www.gic.com.sg).

## ANNEX A

### Programme Fact Sheet: The Purple Symphony

#### 1. What is The Purple Symphony?

The Purple Symphony debuted on 31 July 2015 as Singapore's largest inclusive orchestra comprising musicians with and without special needs. The orchestra comprises 90 members<sup>1</sup> making up five key musical sections: Percussion, Strings (Plucked), Strings (Bow), Winds, and Choir.

Facilitated by Central Singapore Community Development Council, The Purple Symphony is a collaborative project made possible with the support of passionate individual musicians and musicians from the following organisations: Lighthouse School, Movement for the Intellectually Disabled, Pathlight School, Singapore Cheshire Home, Singapore Management University, Singapore Youth Chinese Orchestra and The Little Heartstrings.

#### 2. Why The Purple Symphony?

The Purple Symphony was set up as a platform for musicians to learn and share music with one another, support inclusion, celebrate their abilities, and serve the community as one.

##### ***Members:***

For its members with and without special needs, The Purple Symphony will be a journey of a lifetime in more ways than one. The orchestra will not only provide them with opportunities such as learning, performing and contributing; it will also leave them with rich experiences such as friendship, heart, resilience and dignity.

##### ***Supporters:***

The Purple Symphony also creates a platform for an active community to come together in support of persons with special needs. These include the orchestra's members, their families and caregivers, instructors, volunteers, partners and other supporters with a heart for the special-needs cause.

##### ***Public:***

Through its music and journey, The Purple Symphony strives to impact lives way beyond its members. Its concerts and performances will bring a unique sound and spirit to the nation. It is our hope that the orchestra will help to increase public awareness of the needs, abilities and contributions of persons with special needs; in turn, helping to pave the way for a more inclusive society for all.

#### 3. What is The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme?

The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme was introduced under The Purple Symphony in 2016. Supported by GIC, the programme provides persons with special needs and disadvantaged individuals with an opportunity to develop their musical talent and to perform in public.

GIC's support of \$450,000 over three years for The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme will deeply impact and nurture the lives of the recipients, their supporters, as well as the public. This amount will benefit a minimum of 90 musicians over the three-year period.

The Award is open to all Singaporean Citizens and is valid for one calendar year. The Award is jointly administered by Central Singapore CDC and GIC.

#### **4. Why The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme?**

The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme was implemented to expand the orchestra's outreach to the disadvantaged and special needs community, through structured music lessons and performance opportunities.

The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme will:

- (a) Provide access to learn music for people with special needs and the disadvantaged;
- (b) Build a legacy of love through national-level and other community performances;
- (c) Create livelihood opportunities for gifted individuals.

#### **5. What does The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme comprise?**

The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme will support individuals in the following ways:

- (a) Weekly music lessons with professional instructors identified by the CDC;
- (b) Opportunities to perform in public, with transport costs for persons with special needs borne by the programme where necessary;
- (c) Bonding and learning activities, during which the orchestra can learn as one;
- (d) Individual musician kit, which includes the cost of instrument and concert attire;
- (e) Other miscellaneous costs where applicable.

## 6. Who are the musicians under The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme?

*Wan Wai Yee, 44, Choir*



*Pictured: Wai Yee with Jaffar Sidek Bin Ahmad, who both sang a duet at The Purple Symphony Inaugural Concert on 17 July 2016 at the Drama Centre.*

Wai Yee is one of the first to benefit from **The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme**. A talented singer, Wai Yee, who is visually-impaired, has always had a passion for singing. She took up singing lessons from an American-based vocal coach through cassette tapes more than 10 years ago.

Wai Yee loves music and dreams of being a professional theatre performer one day. Her drive has seen her seeking out various performing opportunities, including singing in a musical (*My Love Is Blind*), and busking in public on a regular basis.

With the support of **The Purple Symphony: Training Award Programme**, Wai Yee is looking forward to receiving regular learning opportunities to further hone her vocal skills.

*“If we start to think that we are at our best, we will reach a plateau and not move on. The Purple Symphony is an opportunity for me to soar further.” – Wai Yee*

**Huang Li Zhen, 28, Violin**



Picking up the violin again after 13 years is Li Zhen's way of encouraging others to explore the opportunities available to them. Having first learnt the violin in Secondary One, Li Zhen had to stop after a year as her spinal cord became inflamed because of Lupus.

She moved into the Singapore Cheshire Home five years ago, after losing her father at the age of 12 and subsequently her mother in 2011. There, she picked up the violin again from a volunteer teacher and has been playing with The Purple Symphony since its debut last year.

*"Though the weekly rehearsals are sometimes tiring for me, playing the violin is my passion and I'm thankful for this opportunity. I hope to encourage more musicians to join The Purple Symphony." – Li Zhen*

## 7. Where has The Purple Symphony performed at since its debut?

Since its debut, The Purple Symphony has played at a number of national events. These include:

31 July 2015:	Official debut of The Purple Symphony at the Singapore Conference Hall
31 Oct 2015:	Special appearance at The Purple Parade 2015
9 Dec 2015:	Special appearance at the closing ceremony of the 8 <sup>th</sup> ASEAN Para Games
17 July 2016:	The Purple Symphony Inaugural Concert

## 8. What are the other funding programmes by GIC?

There are two flagship initiatives under the GIC Giving Programme. Apart from **The Purple Symphony: Training Programme Award**, GIC is also funding "GIC Sparks & Smiles", launched in 2015.

It is a leadership and mentoring programme for selected Singaporean students to fulfil their potential. These students, despite their own difficult financial circumstances, are able to look beyond themselves and seek to be of service to those from disadvantaged families.

Key to this programme is understanding the impact of empathy, positive role-modelling, and the need to instil confidence in others. There is also cash grant for the financial support these students need. As many as 500 students from ITE, polytechnics and the six local universities will benefit from GIC's financial commitment of \$2 million over four years.